

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1489

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: CI, PFOR, PINT

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ASK US POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR NEW
MAGAZINE

1. SUMMARY: THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC) HAVE ASKED THE EMBASSY FOR US OFFICIAL SUPPORT (VERBAL NOT FINANCIAL) FOR THE FOUNDING OF A NEW NEWSWEEKLY, TO REPLACE ITS FORMER ORGAN "ERCILLA." THE EMBASSY WAS ASKED TO INDICATE TO THE GOC THAT IT WOULD BE WISE TO ALLOW THE NEW WEEKLY TO APPEAR. THE PARTY IS APPROACHING THE WHITE HOUSE FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT OR VICE PRESIDENT AND A DIRECT OR IMPLIED MESSAGE OF SUPPORT. WE ARE PREPARED TO PROCEED ON THE FIRST SUGGESTION DISCREETLY, BUT WE ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE SECOND. END SUMMARY.

2. AS THE EMBASSY HAS REPORTED (SANTIAGO A-17AND 0885), THE PDC RECENTLY LOST CONTROL OF CHILE'S BEST NEWSWEEKLY, "ERCILLA." THE MAGAZINE WAS A SERIOUS JOURNALISTIC EFFORT AND HAD BEEN EDITED SO AS TO MAINTAIN THE APPEARANCE OF OBJECTIVITY, BUT HAD CLEARLY REFLECTED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY THINKING. ITS ERSTWHILE DIRECTOR, EMILIO FILIPPI, AND MOST OF HIS STAFF LEFT IN JANUARY, WHEN THEY COULD NO LONGER WORK WITH THE NEW, PRO-GOVERNMENT OWNERS. THE LOSS LEFT THE PDC WITHOUT ASSURED ACCESS TO ANY INFORMATION MEDIUM.

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3. PDC PARTY LEADERS HAVE INFORMED US THAT FILIPPI AND HIS STAFF ARE READY TO BEGIN PUBLISHING IN LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL A NEW MAGAZINE, "HOY," TO BE EDITED IN THE SAME TRADITION AS "ERCILLA." THROUGH VARIOUS FOREIGN SOURCES (CHURCH, PARTIES, FOUNDATIONS, ETC.) THE CHILEAN BACKERS ARE ASSURED LOANS FROM FOREIGN BANKS THAT WILL CARRY "HOY" AT LEAST THROUGH A YEAR. POLITICALLY, THE

PDCERS THINK CIRCUMSTANCES IN CHILE ARE MORE PROPITIOUS THAN THEY WERE SOME MONTHS AGO, AND THE NEW MAGAZINE WILL HAVE A CERTAIN COVER FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

4. OUR PDC INTERLOCUTORS ASKED TWO THINGS OF THE SG: FIRST, THAT THE EMBASSY INDICATE TO THE GOC THAT IT WOULD BE WISE TO ALLOW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW MAGAZINE, THUS PROVING THE LIBERALITY OF THE REGIME. SECOND, THAT THE EMBASSY SUPPORT EFFORTS BY NEW PARTY PRESIDENT ANDRES ZALDIVAR, NOW IN THE US ON VACATION, WHO HAS ACCESS TO MEMBERS OF THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF AND IS SEEKING A PRESIDENTIAL OR VICE PRESIDENTIAL INTERVIEW OR MESSAGE FOR THE FIRST ISSUE OF "HOY."

5. COMMENT: A SUCCESSOR TO "ERCILLA" -- NO MATTER HOW CAREFULLY EDITED TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF PDC PARTISANSHIP -- WOULD HAVE A BASIC VIEWPOINT NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE EMBASSY NEVERTHELESS BELIEVES THE US INTEREST WOULD BE SERVED BY A DISCREET INDICATION TO SELECTED GOC OFFICIALS OF OUR BELIEF THAT THE EXISTENCE OF "HOY" WOULD BE A SIGNAL TO WORLD OPINION THAT THE GOC PERMITS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AT LEAST WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF NON-POLITICAL OBJECTIVITY. THE OLD "ERCILLA" IS MISSED; THERE IS NOW NOTHING LIKE IT IN CHILE. UNLESS INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE, WE WILL THEREFORE MAKE APPROPRIATE COMMENTS TO GOC OFFICIALS.

6. AN INTERVIEW EMPLOYING SUPPORT, OR A DIRECT STATEMENT IN SUPPORT, OF "HOY" BY A SENIOR US LEADER IS A DIFFERENT MATTER. IT WOULD HAVE A CONSIDERABLE IMPACT IN CHILE. THE JUNTA WOULD STRONGLY RESENT IT. SUCH A GESTURE WOULD BE SEEN NOT SIMPLY AS US SUPPORT FOR LIBERAL FORCES, BUT AS BLATANT INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL CONFIDENTIAL

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AFFAIRS OF CHILE ON BEHALF OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. THE EFFECT WOULD BE HEIGHTENED BY ALLEGATIONS CURRENTLY REACHING THE CHILEANS OF PAST CIA SUPPORT FOR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (SEPTEL). GOC SUPPORTERS WOULD EVEN LIKELY TO SPECULATE THAT CIA MONEY WAS BEHIND "HOY."

7. WITH THESE CONSIDERATIONS IN MIND, WE WOULD COUNSEL AGAINST A HIGH-LEVEL MESSAGE. THERE ARE MORE DIRECT METHODS, LESS SUBJECT TO MISINTERPRETATION, FOR COMMUNICATING TO THE CHILEANS THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEWS ON THE PROBLEM OF CHILE.
POPPER

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